

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE: PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

“Nearly two and a half centuries into our experiment of ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people,’ we have learned much about what supports a healthy democracy. We know that expanding the ability of all eligible citizens to vote is the central pillar. That means ensuring that all eligible voters can cast a vote; that all lawful votes are counted; and that every voter has access to accurate information. The Department of Justice will never stop working to protect the democracy to which all Americans are entitled.” - Attorney General Merrick B. Garland

ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS TO PROTECT THE RIGHT TO VOTE

- On August 5, 2021, the Justice Department [announced](#) that it had entered a proposed consent decree to settle a voting rights lawsuit with the State of New Jersey. Under this agreement, the State will designate disability paratransit programs as voter registration agencies.
- On July 12, 2021, the Justice Department [announced](#) it has entered a proposed consent decree to settle a voting rights lawsuit with the Board of Elections of Oneida County, New York. Under this agreement, the Board will develop and implement uniform and nondiscriminatory policies to ensure all election officials review and process all timely submitted voter registration applications and train all poll officials regarding provisional balloting.
- On June 25, 2021, the Justice Department filed a lawsuit, *United States v. Georgia*, that [contends](#) that several provisions of Georgia Senate Bill 202 were adopted with the purpose of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race. The Justice Department’s lawsuit alleges that the cumulative and discriminatory effect of these laws—particularly on Black voters—was known to lawmakers and that lawmakers adopted the law in spite of this.
- On May 5, 2021, DOJ sent a letter to the Arizona Senate, expressing concern over, and explaining federal legal constraints on, the conduct of its post-election audit.
- On April 15, 2021, the Justice Department [announced](#) it has entered a proposed consent decree to settle a voting rights lawsuit with the City of West Monroe, Louisiana. The Justice Department’s lawsuit, brought under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, challenges the current at-large method of electing the West Monroe Board of Aldermen. Under this agreement, the City of West Monroe will change its method of electing its Board of Aldermen to ensure compliance with the protections of the Voting Rights Act.
- On January 12, 2021, the Justice Department reached [agreement](#) with the Board of Election Commissioners for the City of St. Louis to ensure polling place accessibility for voters with disabilities.

DEPARTMENT EFFORTS TO SECURE THE RIGHT TO VOTE

- **Increase Resources:** DOJ delivered on Attorney General Garland’s [promise](#) to double the Civil Rights Division’s enforcement staff for protecting the right to vote. In addition, the Administration has requested Congress provide a total of \$183.2 million for the Civil Rights Division—the largest budget increase in the Division’s history.
- **Review New and Current Voting Laws:** DOJ is scrutinizing *new* laws that seek to curb voter access, and where we see violations of federal law, we will not hesitate to act. DOJ is scrutinizing *current* laws and practices, in order to determine whether they discriminate against Black voters and other voters of color.
- **Guidance to States:** On July 28, 2021, DOJ [published](#) guidance explaining the federal civil and criminal statutes that apply to post-election audits and guidance regarding early voting, voting by mail, and voting for people with disabilities. On September 1, 2021, DOJ published new guidance to make clear voting protections that apply to all jurisdictions as they redraw their legislative maps.
- **Protecting Election Records and Voters:** DOJ will apply the same scrutiny to post-election audits, to ensure they abide by federal statutory requirements to protect election records and avoid the intimidation of voters.
- **Increase Access to Voter Registration:** DOJ will ensure access to voter registration for all eligible individuals in federal custody, which is consistent with President Biden’s executive order to promote access to voting. DOJ will assist other federal agencies in expanding voter registration opportunities, as permitted by law.
- **Combat Disinformation:** DOJ will partner with other federal agencies to combat election disinformation that intentionally tries to suppress the vote.

PROSECUTING THREATS AGAINST ELECTION WORKERS

On June 25, 2021, the Department [launched](#) a task force to address the rise in threats against election officials. On July 15, 2021, the Criminal Division’s Public Integrity Section gave its first training session on threats against election workers to USAOs and FBI field offices. On August 26, 2021, the Attorney General [convened](#) a virtual discussion with a bipartisan group of over 1,400 election officials to discuss threats against election workers and the efforts of the Department’s task force to address these threats.

“The right to vote is one of the most central rights in our democracy and protecting the right to vote for all Americans is at the core of the Civil Rights Division’s mission. The Department of Justice will use all the tools it has available to ensure that each eligible citizen can register, cast a ballot, and have that ballot counted free from racial discrimination.” - Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke for the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division